

# BPRI215 Outdoor Learning through Nature

ECTS Value: 3 ECTS

## Overall Objectives and Outcomes

Children's learning process follows a path forged by a natural curiosity that requires direct sensory experience rather than conceptual generalization. To be effective and engage children based upon their developmental abilities and ways of learning, their subject learning outcomes need to be modelled on immersive and open-ended experiences rather than structured and scripted learning.

Children have an innate tendency to explore and bond with nature. However, in our increasingly urban and technology-oriented lifestyles, children's natural attraction to nature is not given opportunities to flourish. Providing the right experiences requires developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn about the natural world based on principles of child development and learning.

In the context of education for sustainability, there is compelling evidence that children's lack of exposure to nature has a cost to both their personal development and significantly, to their environmental behaviour as adults.

This Module provides the skills and competences to deliver outdoor learning through nature to primary school children in the following progression:

1. Understanding the difference between adults' and children's perceptions and ways of experiencing nature that define their relationship with it. Theories of early childhood empathy and middle childhood exploration. Learning outcomes and content.
2. Understanding the teacher's role as a leader in sustainability values: global and local environmental challenges and the link to connecting with nature as the key factor influencing motivation to change. Learning outcomes and content.
3. Creating learning environments in nature and developing a methodology to deliver learning through nature. Challenges of the physical environment and possible solutions. Learning outcomes and content.

By the end of this module, the learner will be able to:

## Competences

- a. create controlled situations in nature that will benefit children's experiential learning of subject LOs and create a relationship with the environment that imbues sustainability values;
- b. represent active citizenship by using outdoor learning through nature to transfer the values of sustainable living;
- c. demonstrate how outdoor learning through nature creates an excellent platform for interpersonal, intercultural, social, and civic competences through presenting a practice constructed on the Module methodology;
- d. transform structured, restrictive outdoor learning spaces into experiential learning through nature areas.

## Knowledge

- a. Describing global anthropogenic influences on climate and the natural environment and making links with the local context.
- b. Identifying curricular areas that allow opportunities for education for sustainable development as defined by the Module.
- c. Understanding a teaching methodology for curriculum-linked outdoor learning through nature that demonstrates the benefits of connecting children with nature as well as the benefits of outdoor learning on children's education, physical and emotional wellbeing and values towards sustainable living.
- d. Constructing lessons based on principles of curriculum-linked outdoor learning through nature.
- e. Identifying opportunities for creating appropriate learning environments on the school grounds/ the local community.

## Skills

- a. Applying learning theory of children's experience of the natural environment through the design of appropriate learning spaces and lessons.
- b. Taking responsibility for continued personal learning through enlarging their reading base by including course reading subject area (pedagogy and content).
- c. Appraising own experience as learners in their formal education period in its effectiveness in education for sustainability.
- d. Illustrate examples of anthropogenic influences on the local environment and its reflection in children's values.

## Assessment Methods

This module will be assessed through: Practical Assignment(s)

## Suggested Readings

### Core Reading List:

1. MCLEOD, S. (2015) Jean Piaget. [Online]. Available from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html#schema>
2. COPPLE, C., BREDEKAMP, C. (eds) (2009) Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8. Washington, D.C., National Association for the Education of Young Children.
3. HARTMANN, T. (2007) The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight: We're Made Out of Ancient Sunlight.
4. ROBERTSON, J. (2014) Dirty Teaching: A beginner's guide to teaching outdoors.
5. <http://www.schoolslearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/pages/about-the-framework>

## Supplementary Reading List:

1. WILSON, R.A. (1996) Starting Early: Environmental Education during the Early Childhood Years.
2. TILBURY, D. (1994). The critical learning years for environmental education.
3. BILTON, H. (2010) Outdoor learning in the early years. [Online] Available from <http://www.fountaingateps.vic.edu.au/images/FGPS/brochure/pdf/Outdoor%20Learning.pdf>
4. TILBURY, D. (1997) Environmental education: a head, heart and hand approach to learning about environmental problems. In New Horizons in Education, July 1977.
5. KELLERT, S.R. (2005) Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection.